

# FRANCE AND HER COLONIES

## A SHARP ATTACK ON THE MINISTRY OF MARINE.

### ACCUSED OF IGNORANTLY NEGLECTING FRENCH INTERESTS IN EASTER ISLAND AND THE COOK GROUP.

PARIS, Jan. 21.—In the Chamber of Deputies to-day Bishop Freppel asked what measures the Government was taking to protect the position of France in the Pacific, especially with regard to Easter Island and the Cook group. Easter Island, he said, was needed as a port of call for ships plying between Panama and Australia; yet it was reported that the Government had ceded the island to Chili. Further, although the Tongway group belonged to Tahiti, England had annexed two of those islands. Did the Government regard this annexation as final? And what action was intended in view of the recent English annexations in the Cook group?

Admiral Krantz, Minister of Marine, replied that the Admirals of the navy had been consulted on the subject, and all had agreed that it was useless to retain Easter Island. The island had no harbor, and its population was decreasing. It would have been necessary to place a garrison on the island, as otherwise the stores of coal, &c., deposited there for the use of French ships would have served the enemy in time of war. As for the Cook Islands, they had never belonged to France. English missionaries who had settled there had urged the natives to assert their independence. Regarding the Tongways, the Government held that England had no right to retain the two islands which she had annexed, although the islands really possessed no importance.

Bishop Freppel said that Admiral Krantz's reply had caused as much surprise as pain. It was clear that the Ministry of Marine was only half informed. He maintained the importance of Easter Island. Besides the annexation of the Tongways, he said, the British had neglected no opportunity to deal a blow at French influence in Oceanica. The Government was either ill-informed or wanting in firmness. The British had annexed the Cook Islands because the excellent harbor there enabled them to avoid calling at French ports. France had abandoned Egypt and the New-Hebrides, and the colonial administration was again showing negligence and incapacity.

The Minister of Marine, responding, maintained his ground, adding that France must claim the whole Tahite group, but that if they were not surrendered there would be no reason for declaring war against Great Britain as the national honor was in nowise concerned.

The Chamber of Deputies to-day finally discussed the Recruiting bill. The members of the Right protested that the measure would aggravate the burdens of the country. The law of 1872 sufficed for the needs of the nation. M. de Freycinet, Minister of War, replied that the bill was not introduced to meet special circumstances; it was a law for national defense. France was compelled to place 3,000,000 of men in line of battle to defend her frontiers. The whole bill was passed by a vote of 369 to 169. It is doubtful if the Senate will accept the amendments of the Chamber of Deputies.

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